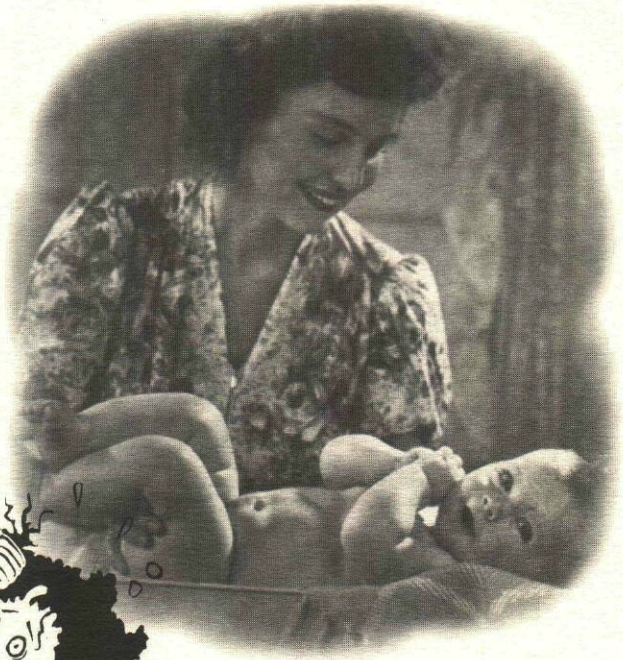
Autumn 1996 ◆ Number 9

The Women's Quarterly

Turning Back the Clock



Drawing by Jan Thornhill

To the 1950s? Or Beyond?

Danielle Crittenden on the New Traditionalists

TWQ Interviews *Laura Schlessinger*, New Traditionalist Guru

Are You a New Traditionalist? *Take Our Quiz!*

Plus: Let's Trade in the New Man for the Old Model

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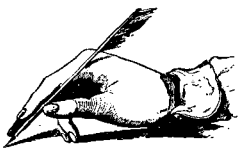
Diary



Gender Pap

There was a moment during this election season when I honestly wondered whether women's suffrage had been a good idea. This heretical thought came to me during the Republican convention, when a rape victim recalled her ordeal for the assembled delegates. Suddenly I felt as if I were watching a campus "Take Back the Night" rally rather than a political convention. Actually, it was worse than that. It was embarrassing, undignified, and wholly unrelated to the business at hand. The unspeakable crime that had been committed against this poor woman was now being used, with her active consent, for political purposes: to manipulate an audience into recognizing the "human side" of a political party.

Why did Republican organizers feel they needed this woman to convince us of this "human side"? Obviously because they had decided that their political survival depended upon closing the so-called gender gap. And closing this gap, it seems, means recognizing that for women not only is the personal political, but *only* the personal is political. Women, the Republicans evidently thought, are unable to distance their own immediate concerns from consideration of the common good; they cannot distinguish between their personal problems and society's problems. Thus, women will not believe in a candidate's compassion unless he can demonstrate personal weakness; they will not believe he can govern unless he claims to have experienced virtually every problem and pain a voter might complain of; they believe a man's bravery in war is not diminished by his willingness to blubber on and on about it afterward; they believe that a candidate's positions on issues—whether it is cutting taxes or welfare reform—are less important than whether he comes across as a man who can "connect" with people.

Depressingly, the organizers seemed to have got their audience right. The subsequent favorable polls showed that women *do* love this stuff. It's hard to believe now that future planners of conventions won't, in the name of capturing the female vote, imitate San Diego—whether it's having the candidate's wife stroll the audience with a hand mike, or artfully lighting the podiums in pink and lavender, or allowing children to crawl the floor. (Babies have, I noticed, replaced smelly cigars as the Republican delegate's accessory of choice. At one point during the television coverage, Larry King upbraided Mary Matalin for the organizers' failure to provide a daycare center. No one asked, What were babies doing at a political convention in the first place?)

Certainly the Democrats learned a few lessons in scoring with women from their Republican rivals. Their convention in Chicago offered up an even longer parade of victims and, if possible, even fuzzier sentimentality. Incredibly, the film that introduced President Clinton's speech—a film meant to show off the accomplishments of his first term in office—went nowhere near the president's policies. Instead, it dwelt at length upon the man's feelings about what it's like to be president and the incredible growing experience that the job has been for him. The film's message appeared to be that we should support the president for his lovable self, not for anything he's actually done. Maybe I'm alone in female company on this one, but as luridly interesting as I found the assurances of the president's mother-in-law that she still held a good opinion of Bill Clinton, I'm more inclined to judge our leader by the opinion of others: Do our allies respect him? Do our enemies fear him?

In any case, what we should worry about—particularly as women—is the new political era the 1996 conventions ushered in. This era elevates emotions over reason, the private over the public. It is the product of thirty years of teaching women to mistrust men and masculinity. Strength, conviction, self-restraint, abstract appeals to liberty, justice, and the common good—these are qualities that clearly will no longer play in Peoria if a candidate hopes to be elected by women as well as men.

If that's what seventy-six years of women's suffrage has amounted to, well, you can take back my vote.

~ Danielle Crittenden

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The Women's Quarterly

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Danielle Crittenden
Editor

Grace Paine Terzian
Publisher

Mitzi Hamilton
Art Director

Rhonda K. Mohrmann
Assistant to the Editor

Lynne Warren
Copy Editor

Dawn Rebecca Saul
Circulation Manager

2111 Wilson Boulevard
Suite 550, Arlington, Virginia
22201-3057
Tel. 703/243-8989
Toll Free Line: 800/224-6000
Fax: 703/243-9230
E-mail: iwf@iwf.org
Website: http://www.iwf.org

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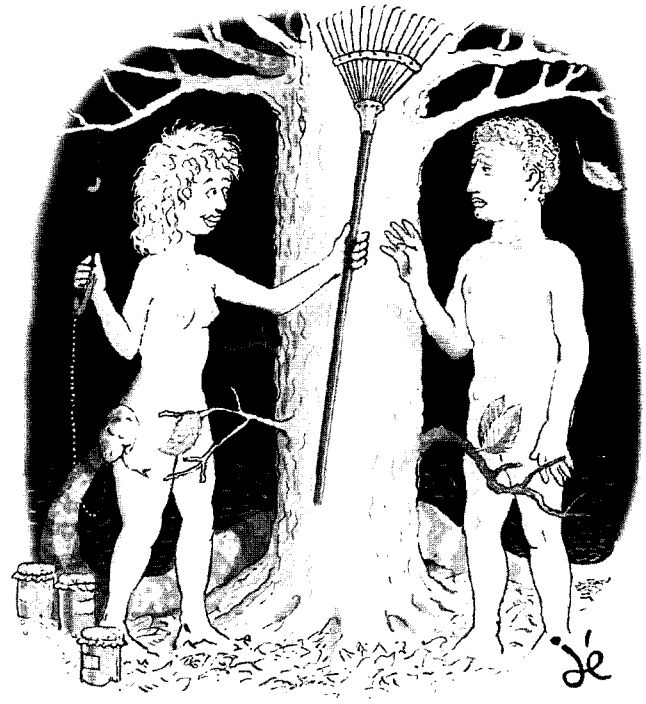

Cartoon by Charles Jaffé

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Rapists' Feminist Allies

What is NOW doing in bed with these guys? asks *Deidre Raver*

This past summer a seven-year-old girl was brutally raped by a fifty-seven-year-old deranged man who later told police he was infected with HIV. The little girl and her five-year-old brother had been lured to a secluded, abandoned building in the East New York section of Brooklyn. The man raped and sodomized the girl. Her brother, meanwhile, was beaten, tied up, and forced to witness his sister's rape. After the man's arrest, the defendant refused to be tested for the AIDS virus by the Brooklyn District Attorney's office. Incredibly—but not unusually—his refusal to take the test was permitted.

Under New York's privacy laws—as well as those of many other states—a person accused of rape cannot be involuntarily tested for the AIDS virus until he is convicted of the crime. For a rape victim like the little girl in Brooklyn, that can mean months of waiting in fear for her own test results.

Surprisingly, the feminist organizations that have worked hard to make rape a prominent women's issue, vowing that they will "no longer be silent" about this most despicable of crimes, are uncharacteristically silent when it comes to defending victims against HIV-infected rapists. This is because groups like the National Organization for Women have joined with AIDS activists to oppose any mandatory HIV testing and to protect the privacy rights of those infected with the deadly virus, even if they're sex offenders.

So, for instance, NOW has failed to show support for the HIV Prevention Act of 1996, an HIV notification bill recently proposed by Republican congressman Tom Coburn, that would allow rape victims to learn the HIV status of their accused assailants after arrest, and would also hold rapists legally responsible for transmitting the HIV virus.

The AIDS Action Council, one of the largest AIDS advocacy organizations in the country, opposes the bill. In disturbingly cold language, the group asserted in a press release that, "Rape and sexual assault survivors need to take care of themselves and not concentrate on the HIV status of their assailant.... Only by being tested themselves over a period of time will they know their own status."

According to the national office of NOW, the group takes no official position on HIV testing of accused rapists. Spokeswoman Melissa Sheldon said that the organization's response to the HIV Protection Act was not in any of her policy manuals and that she would have to confer with NOW's national president to clarify their position on testing sex offenders. She did not call back. Meanwhile, a spokeswoman for the NOW chapter in New York City would say only that NOW is "not for non-voluntary testing and we're not pro-mandatory testing." She then referred me to Anne Connors, presi-

Woodcut by John Held Jr.

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dent of the local chapter, for further explanation. Ms. Connors did not return my calls. A spokeswoman for NOW's chapter in New Jersey said the president of her chapter would get back to me. She never did.

NOW's opposition to HIV testing is symptomatic of its approach to rape in general. NOW and feminist groups against violence tend to view rape as a social disease rather than a criminal act. Because they believe that most men are capable of sexual assault, it follows that they believe rapists are not intrinsically worse than most men.

These groups have therefore traditionally lobbied for solutions like "education" and "crime prevention" rather than stiffer punishments for serious sex offenders. These programs also have the added benefit of steering millions of dollars of public funding into the coffers of their organizations rather than into, say, prisons. In calculating the high cost of incarcerating a rapist, the Coalition Against Sexual Assault in New York State noted optimistically, "Preventing sexual assaults not only saves these survivor-related expenses but also enormous justice costs."

Perhaps this is why feminist organizations have declined to protest judicial decisions that shrug off the AIDS danger to victims of rape. Just this past August, Maryland's highest court went so far as to overturn a conviction of attempted murder against a man who had raped three women after having tested positive for HIV.

Dwight Smallwood, a violent, twenty-one-year-old sex offender with AIDS raped three women at gunpoint in Prince George's County, Maryland, in September of 1993. During each attack, Smallwood threatened to kill the victim if she did not cooperate, and told her he would shoot her if she reported the crime to police.

Smallwood was sentenced to life in prison for the rapes, but because he knew of his HIV status and was aware that it could be transmitted to his victims, prosecutors successfully had him convicted for intent to murder and attempted murder. They argued, according to the *Washington Post*, "that Smallwood's HIV-positive status was equivalent to a 'deadly weapon' and that for him to have unprotected sex with someone was the equivalent of firing a loaded gun at the person."

Yet the Maryland Court of Appeals reversed these convictions, stating that "intent to kill" was never proven, since Smallwood did not verbally communicate his HIV status during the rape assaults—legal reasoning Gary E. Blair, the chief of the Criminal Appeals Division for the state's attorney general, found absurd. As he told the court, if someone points a gun at another person, he need not say, "I hope to kill you," in order to establish a charge of attempted murder.

Furthermore, Smallwood's own medical records, released by Prince George's County Detention Center, showed that he had been previously counseled by a social worker who told him that he had tested positive for the HIV virus and would need to practice "safe sex" to prevent transmitting his disease to others.

This was unpersuasive to the appeals court judge, who said that it could not be proven AIDS would result from Smallwood's sexual assaults the same way death would be a probable result from firing a weapon. The current HIV status of the rape victims is not available.

Instead of protesting verdicts like this one, the self-proclaimed women's advocacy groups prefer to cash in on federal "rape awareness" programs. The Safe Streets Act of the federal Violence Against Women Act has earmarked more than $28 million for rape education, with the requirement that at least twenty-five percent of the funds be targeted at students in middle, junior high, and high school.

This multi-million-dollar focus on education, at the expense of punishing and incarcerating offenders, will ultimately punish the victims—and not just the victims of rape.

Earlier this year, a six-year-old child sitting on a New York City subway with her parents was lunged at and stabbed with a dirty needle by a homeless man. The family was unable to obtain a court order to have the man tested for HIV because the accused had not yet been convicted.

Reacting to the public's outcry, the New York Senate passed legislation that—like the federal HIV Prevention Act—would allow victims of crime the right to test their alleged assailants for HIV. The legislation is currently stalled in the state assembly's health committee.

All too predictably, NOW is silent. ◆

Deidre Raver is co-founder of Women Against Violence, an advocacy group for female victims of crime based in New York City.

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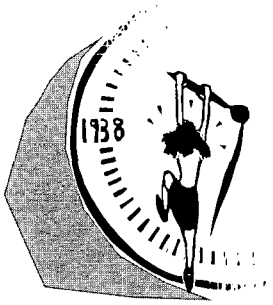
Turning Back the Clock

To the 1950s? wonders *Danielle Crittenden,* or beyond?



Over the past few months, I've watched my neighbors pour thousands of dollars into the expansion of their turn-of-the-century house. Built in 1895 as a modest, wood frame cottage on what were then farmers' fields on the outskirts of Washington, the house must now meet the demands of late twentieth-century life. While my neighbors have attempted to preserve the house's style—copying old roof shingles, moldings, high ceilings, and adding a neo-Victorian porch that looks as if it should perch over Long Island Sound but only overlooks my kids fighting in our backyard—they have otherwise gutted the inside. The parlors have been knocked out to create an enormous kitchen/family room with a computer center, two Sub-Zero refrigerators, and a TV that pops up from a counter.

As I watch the workmen come and go, I realize that my neighbors are trying to achieve architecturally what so many of us are hoping to do in our own lives: reconcile traditional structure with modern convenience. My generation of conservatives, who came of age after virtually every institution from marriage to religion had been left a smoking ruin, has often been accused of wanting to "turn back the clock." It is said that we naively yearn to return to simpler times and simpler values. Feminists in particular will reflexively reply to all dissenters, "you want to take women back to the 1950s," a charge that is supposed to be self-evidently horrifying. (Although these days the fifties don't look so bad: crime rates were low, the economy was booming, teenagers didn't talk back, and Eisenhower was in the White House.) The many critics of young conservatives seem to believe that "old-fashioned values"—as they call garden-variety morality—are incompatible with modern life. And they consider any attempt to salvage bygone institutions as a pointless exercise in nostalgia.

While it's obviously true that you can't go back in time, it's not true that the teachings and principles that have guided humans since the beginning of civilization have suddenly become irrelevant. You don't have to be a wistful conservative to wonder why it was that previous generations were willing to give up their lives for their country while today few will give up their seat on a bus to a pregnant woman.

The real problem facing us is that anyone who attempts to revive the so-called old-fashioned values still wakes up in the morning as a modern person. And as modern people, even as modern conservatives, most of us are glad to be spared the wars and depression that so brutally taught character to our grandparents.

So, like my neighbors with their house, we preserve what we like of the old while adopting what is convenient of the new. Often the results are incongruous, and even hypocritical. We may reject reformed, squishy religious services in favor of more rigorous worship, but we will also usually reject religious restrictions on diet or personal conduct. We may believe strongly in marriage, but we would never impose social sanctions upon those who fail or betray their vows, or even upon those couples who refuse to take those vows in the first place. We may believe in tougher discipline for our children, but still blanch at what now seem the impossibly strict standards of our grandparents. And as women, we may accept most of the duties of child care, but we certainly won't take sole charge of the housekeeping, and we snap at our husbands if for a moment they expect otherwise.

It's easy to ridicule us New Traditionalists, just as it was easy to sneer at the Babbitts of the 1920s or the Harriet Nelsons of the 1950s. Domestic life—particularly bourgeois, homeowning, child-rearing, domestic life—must always appear stultifying and unaesthetic to those who imagine themselves living sophisticated, modern lives. Then, of course, these same critics get married and have babies. Suddenly they find themselves walking up and down the appliance aisles at Sears, two screaming children in tow. And the whole cycle starts again, a cycle that is the only hope for our society carrying on as it is. Or should I say, as it was. ◆

Drawings by Jan Thornhill

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How You Differ From Your Parents: *A Handy Guide*

	New Traditionalist	Old Traditionalist
Church	You go because you think you should	You go because it's never occurred to you that you don't have to
Child care	Mother quits work to devote herself to full-time, attentive care	Mother quits college to devote herself to full-time, inattentive care
Cooking guru	Martha Stewart	Betty Crocker
Dad's role	Reminds Mom when it's baby's feeding time	Reminds Mom when it's Dad's feeding time
Child discipline technique	Time-out	Spanking
What mother says to child when he asks about sex	Mother answers question	Mother dodges question
Role models	William Bennett	Douglas MacArthur
Age of mother when she first gave birth	Thirty-four	Twenty-four
Response to troubled children	Counseling	Military school
Vehicle in driveway	Minivan, fully loaded	Station wagon, loaded with groceries
Favorite TV Show	"Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman"	"Gunsmoke"
Leisure activity	Spending time with the kids	Escaping the kids
Catalogue	L.L. Bean	Sears, Roebuck & Co.
Baby guru	Penelope Leach	Grandma
The one thing Dad really hates about Bill Clinton	Lying	Crying
The one thing Mom likes about Hillary Clinton	Despite everything, a smart woman in public life	Despite everything, stays with husband
Content of kid's lunchbox	Turkey on pita, sugarless juice, fruit roll-up	Ham and cheese on white, Welch's grape juice, Twinkie
Dad's favorite TV sport	Baseball	Football
Feminist who scares you most	Catharine MacKinnon	Alan Alda
Bugged by	Women soldiers	Women drivers
Thinks political correctness goes too far when it suppresses...	Jokes about sex	Jokes about ethnicity
Take on sexual equality	"Just because I stay home doesn't mean I'm not his equal"	"Just because I give her my paycheck doesn't mean I'm not the boss"
Heretical thought	Wonders whether Phyllis Schlafly wasn't right	Wonders whether Joe McCarthy wasn't right

~with thanks to David Frum

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Interview

You Asked for It

Yes, the old truths are tough, says radio host *Laura Schlessinger*, but that's what makes them worthwhile

There are few public figures so forcefully engaged in trying to apply old-fashioned morality to the problems of modern life as Laura Schlessinger, known popularly across North America as "Dr. Laura." Her call-in radio program, after only two years of national syndication, has a daily listening audience of more than fifteen million, second only to Rush Limbaugh. She is the author of the best-selling book Ten Stupid Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives *(now in paperback from HarperCollins) and the more recent,* How Could You Do That?!: The Abdication of Character, Courage, and Conscience *(HarperCollins: 1996).*

Her popularity seems to be based on two factors: the tough—and often rough—approach she takes to her listeners' problems; and her insistence that she is as tough—and rough—on herself. "The message and the messenger are one," she told us. That messenger, like so many of her generation who are now on the cusp of turning fifty, is a repentant Boomer—maybe the *most repentant Boomer—who repudiated most of her early radical notions after she got married and had a kid.*

Schlessinger was born in 1947 in Brooklyn, New York. She is the elder of two daughters of a Jewish father and an Italian mother. In her college years, Schlessinger got caught up in the heady feminism of the late sixties. After a brief, disastrous marriage, she became even more adamant in her belief that a woman's happiness lay in a satisfying career and independent emotional life. She earned a Ph.D. in physiology at Columbia University, before going on to get a post-doctoral degree in marriage, family, and child therapy at the University of Southern California. She then taught psychology at Pepperdine University for eight years and began hosting her radio program for a local Los Angeles station. It wasn't until she reached her mid-thirties that Schlessinger felt there was "something profoundly missing" from her life. Still fearful that commitment might somehow compromise her, she dated Lewis Bishop, a professor at the University of Southern California and thirteen years her senior, for nearly a decade before marrying him. The couple eventually had one child, a son named Deryk, now ten. And she decided to convert to conservative Judaism. Schlessinger has subsequently taken to marriage, motherhood, and her religious beliefs with a zeal that would impress Ralph Reed. On the other hand, she remains in many ways a product of her generation: she keeps her maiden name; she believes women should get married and have children later rather than earlier; she told her son about sex when he was five. Yet this odd hybrid of new and old personality is probably why so many people turn to her for advice. Schlessinger is able to take, as she puts it, "four thousand years of reasonable thought" and convey it with the slang and slickness of any modern-day shock jock.

Laura Schlessinger spoke with TWQ *interviewer* ***Maureen Sirhal*** *by telephone from her home in Los Angeles.*

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TWQ: Who calls you more often, women or men?
LS: It's about equal.
TWQ: In your first book, you offered an observation about feminism—
LS: Today's feminism. I don't mean the women who marched so we could vote.
TWQ: You said that young women have grown up believing all the stuff in the women's lib movement. That you can be a mother, be a doctor. That you can have it all. And you said this wasn't true.
LS: Nobody can have it all simultaneously. No man can, no woman can.
TWQ: So what would you say to young women? Can they still have kids and a demanding job?
LS: Anybody who has ovaries can have kids. The question is, are you going to be able to take care of the family properly or is the family going to be sort of an accessory, like shoes. That's the category I fear children have been put into today. We have false information out there: kids don't need families, full-time day care is fine. Yet not one of these women you are talking about would ever have chosen that sort of care for themselves, would they? They wanted the benefit of a loving mom and dad who were there.

We have never had a higher teen suicide rate, or drug, alcohol, and violence [rates] in our history. Kids don't have discipline, direction, love, or a place to go at night for affection. It's so obvious what the problems are. This notion that you can "have it all" is absurd. Something has to give, and it's usually the family.
TWQ: Do you think the women of the baby-boom generation are figuring this out?
LS: In all the statistics I have seen, the young people of the baby boomers are the ones turning it around. They're the ones saying, "I don't want to raise my kids the way my parents had me growing up." I think the kids who have suffered through their parents' selfishness are the ones who are going to turn it around.
TWQ: What do you say to the women who *have* to go to work, who don't have a choice?
LS: Who are they, the ones who don't have a choice? There have been enough articles, television programs, newsletters, and books giving evidence to the fact that it is not always true that two parents have to work or they're going to starve. The money they spend on daycare and eating out (or bringing home fast food since nobody bothers with dinner anymore), the money they spend on clothes, driving and parking, [results] in not much profit from the second income. I didn't go out and buy a car until I could afford the payments, the upkeep, and the insurance. I think people shouldn't have children until they can do the same. And when you say that, everybody's aghast. I reply: a human being is of less value than a car? You should wait till you're educated, settled, and married. Give it three to five years of marriage until you're really sure you have a stable marriage. You should actually plan. Yes, there are people for whom the circumstances are such that they must absolutely work; the one thing no one wants to admit is that it is a tragedy for the children—an absolute tragedy. A lot of people have taken that tragedy and said, "No, it's fine." They lie to try to make themselves feel better. No matter what you do, or have to do, you should not have any hurt feelings or any regret or pain, and so we live in lies. We just live in lies.
TWQ: What if fathers helped out more?
LS: The fact of the matter is that I get calls from wives who don't respect their husbands if the men are at home taking care of the kids. That is not a woman's vision of a man. So while women will complain when they are the ones stuck at home, when you give them a man who's willing to do it, they don't respect him. How can you whine and complain about your role in society, and when the man takes it over, you don't respect him? Let's take ten of your friends who are unmarried and let me introduce them to ten men who say, "My dream is to be home taking care of my children." Do you think these men will get a second date?
TWQ: I doubt it.
LS: See?
TWQ: Okay, then, what about single mothers? What should they do?
LS: How did they get to be single mothers?
TWQ: You can pick the circumstances.
LS: No, it makes a difference.
TWQ: Does it?
LS: Yes. Why don't you think so? Life takes place in our bodies. We should be circumspect about with whom and when we have sex because sex makes babies, even with the best contraception. If you're not sterile, you'll eventually get pregnant, that's a fact. Now, in these cases, single mothers can put the kids up for adoption to two-parent, intact families. I think that would be the best thing to do.
TWQ: Do you think the children raised in a single-parent household can overcome the detrimental effects if the one parent is a very strong mother or father?
LS: At least you're admitting there can be a detrimental

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effect. You are one of the only people to admit that. I'm going to have you Plexiglassed! The point is not being "strong," the point is not being there. Let's just face it. It doesn't matter how good you would be. If you're not there, you're not there.

TWQ: So you don't think children can be normal in a single-parent household?

LS: Sure they can, but it's much harder. When we look at children in single-parent households, you see an increase in sex, violence, drinking, depression, problems at school. When there's a death of a parent, families rally around. When someone just gets knocked up, families don't rally around. When there's a divorce, and remarrying, and boyfriends living in, and all that, families don't rally around. Kids cope better when a parent has died than with divorce.

TWQ: With death, they feel the circumstances are beyond their control?

LS: Yes, exactly. The parent was there, and they have the memories of love, and they don't have the ongoing memory of fights in court or the parent not coming to see them, not calling, not paying support.

"My priority is family first, career second"

TWQ: To some, your advice might seem to contradict your own circumstances. You *do* seem to have it all. How do you cope as a working mother?

LS: Well, I work my career around my family. I don't have it all. Without family, I'd be involved in more enterprises. As it is, I leave the house at ten in the morning. My kid is at school at eight A.M. I am back home at four in the afternoon, and he comes home at three. So for one hour he doesn't have a mother, he has a father, because my husband—his dad—works out of the house. We don't have dinners apart. If Deryk goes over to a buddy's house and sleeps over, we have dinner apart, but that's because he's at a buddy's house, not because I'm working. If someone in business invites me out to dinner, we all go. If anyone wants me to do a speaking engagement out of town, they have to pay for me, my husband, and my son. That's how we live. My priority is family first, career second. I am horrified at the notion of six in the morning you see your kids, eight o'clock at night you see them again. To me that's cruel.

TWQ: I've heard you stress this on the radio—how your son goes everywhere with you. Have you ever been criticized for being obsessive about mothering?

LS: No, and I'm not obsessive about mothering. I am extremely pro-family. I have pounds of mail from men and women thanking me for supporting parenting.

TWQ: Is it difficult to protect your son from your critics?

LS: Every now and then when someone criticizes me I bring it to his attention. He says, "Some people are really scared about what you have to say, aren't they?" At age ten, he is very astounding. I will say, "How does this make you feel when someone says something bad about your mommy?" And he says, "Well, they are wrong and they're stupid and who cares? I know what you do and that is all that matters to me," and he hugs me and goes off and plays. He is a very stable kid.

TWQ: What was your own family dynamic like growing up?

LS: It was quite difficult. My father was a nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn who was in the Army as a lieutenant, liberating Northern Italy. He met my mother, a nice Italian girl—a knockout—and married her and brought her back. Some of the Jewish family of my dad's here were not exactly enthralled. If she had been ugly they might have been nicer to her. So there was a lot of cruelty, a lot of rejection, and a lot of pain. And that, I am sure, was extremely difficult for them. When I was Deryk's age, and really aware of what was going on, it was very sad.

"The religions you see going around today are New Age: they schmooze you up and require nothing of you"

TWQ: What do you think is the solution for people who feel lost in modern life?

LS: Religion. I frankly think my show is so successful because I am filling a gap for people, the gap that used to be filled by family and religion. I could do a whole show on twenty-two-year-olds. There's no family they can turn to, to ask the questions they ask me. Their families divested themselves of religion a long time ago for one very basic reason: religion requires something of you. The religions you see going around today are New Age: they schmooze you up and require nothing of you; whereas formal, traditional religion requires something of you, an obligation to

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come out of your egotistical and consumeristic point of view and embrace discipline, sacrifice, and holiness.

TWQ: Why did you decide to convert to conservative Judaism?

LS: I have always identified myself as a Jew. I have Jewish blood through my father. For me, conversion was no switch; it was a formalization.

TWQ: Do you think it is important to marry someone of the same race or religion?

LS: They are not the same thing. Ethnicity, to me, is irrelevant to whom you marry. Religion, I think, is very important. When families embrace a religion and celebrate it together, you're going to have a much stronger family life. When people call in and say, "I'm Catholic and I am marrying an atheist," I really get on their case about not marrying another Catholic. They pretend it's going to work out, but I get the calls after the marriage, with kids—the "My God, we should have thought about this."

TWQ: But what do two people do if they've already fallen in love?

LS: First of all, one of the things I tell Deryk is, you can fall in love with anybody—*anybody*. It's not enough to base a good marriage on. You need to fall in love with somebody who has the same dreams, the same ideals and goals, the same notion about family, the same notions about ethics and morality. If you don't marry a person with these things in common, romantic love is going to fade and you're going to be left with torture. So deciding whom you're going to date early on is important. You don't start with somebody you know you're not going to finish with. You don't sleep around.

TWQ: There has been much talk lately, particularly during this current election, that America is in a moral crisis. Do you believe this is so?

LS: Totally! When you get somebody like me who is simply saying there are moral ways of handling things, and I can get attacked for it, you know we have a moral crisis.

"My son and I were discussing sex from the age of five on"

TWQ: Do your listeners tend to agree with your answers?

LS: The letters I usually receive say "I agree with you" seventy-five to ninety-five percent of the time. But I'm not interested in agreement. I appreciate the respect for my different views more.

TWQ: Do you ever think that you are too hard on callers?

LS: I don't think I am too hard, but I am direct and blunt. People call me knowing exactly what I do. So when you say I am too hard, well, they picked me. They know I am going to be tough and relentless in pursuing the truth, and they avail themselves to that opportunity. And that opportunity doesn't exist much out there, because most people will let you get away with a lie.

TWQ: What do you do when you get hit with an incredibly tough question?

LS: I don't answer the question, I go for the philosophical point. And there are times people will call me with the most incredible mess, like, "I have three kids by three different men: one lives in one state, one lives in the other state, and one lives in a third state. I know kids should be near their dads, so what should I do?" I haven't got the vaguest idea. To me that call is a message to the millions of people at home saying, "Oy, I don't want to be in that position." I don't think there's an answer. This is one you shrug and say, "This hole is too deep. Not everything can be fixed." To this caller I said, "Two of these kids are not going to have the benefits that the third has." Then people at home will have to take responsibility for what they're doing.

TWQ: What should parents tell their kids about sex?

LS: My son and I were discussing sex from the age of five on. I talked about how sex feels good, how a lot of his teenage friends are going to do it and say he's a weenie if he doesn't. But let me explain, I said to him, all the things that may happen if you do. I was very frank about all these things, and when I got to abortion, he said, "What's that?" I said that is when the girl takes the baby out of her belly. "Well, how does it live?" he asked. "It doesn't," I said.

"You mean it dies?" "Yes." He was just horrified: "They waste a perfectly good kid?"

He has also been brought up in a very Jewish home where certain things are elevated to holiness: the sanctity of marriage and sex within marriage.

TWQ: What do you say to these college women who run around behaving like men, running from one relationship to the next?

LS: That is what women's liberation said we should do, didn't they? We should debase our bodies as most men do. I say these college women should listen to my show because they will hear women who've been where they are now. My show gives you a chance to look at your future. You are screwing around and look where you will be at

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twenty-five: three kids by different men, with scarred ovaries from all the STDs.

"The women's movement constantly said what we should have but it didn't look at who we were"

TWQ: Is this then how the women's movement missed the mark? By saying we should be like men?

LS: The women's movement ignored the reality of female nature and male nature; it pretended we were all unisex robots. They constantly said what we should have, but they didn't look at who we were and what we really wanted. So I think in that way they lost a grip on really helping women. When I talk to women, I am real clear about what our ultimate possibilities are, and what our weaknesses are, and how we have to fight against our weaknesses. "But I love him"—that emotion is very powerful in women, much more powerful than in men. "I really love her, but I have to go climb Mt. Everest"—that's more male. And it isn't all socialization. If I say "You need to be a man," you tell me what are the first words that come to your mind?

TWQ: Suck it up, be brave.

LS: Now how about, "Be a woman?"

TWQ: Nothing comes to mind.

LS: Interesting … maybe "emotional"? I remember a story in the *New York Times* about a bunch of female lawyers deciding that the law and the way we teach law is "masculine" and not appropriate for women. I was laughing on air. I went after them with a vengeance. [They said legal reasoning and the Socratic method of teaching law] is too tough for women. I thought, I don't believe this! These are feminists saying that we have to change the entire legal system and how we teach law because they can't handle being embarrassed in front of a classroom when they can't answer quickly. Doesn't that scare you? That's the new feminism.

Now, when Susan Smith killed her children to clear the way for this rich boyfriend, and we started hearing about all these other mothers doing harm to their children, feminists blamed it on their "low self-esteem." The men, of course, are "evil," but the women have "low self-esteem." Feminists don't deal with the truth. They have a rigid agenda that women are oppressed. Any evil that women perpetrate is just a by-product of that oppression, not a lack of character, or courage, or conscience.

TWQ: But you were once a feminist?

LS: Yes, I was in college and the feminist movement was my movement. Getting married and having children was a "cop-out." You know, you lost your status, your power, your everything. So I decided I was going to become super-successful and not let anyone get in the way of that. I say I am a reformed feminist, because I see the error of those ways and have a healthy, joyous balance with family.

TWQ: Was getting married at an older age wiser, do you think?

LS: In *Ten Stupid Things* I say it ought to be made illegal for women to get married under the age of thirty. Because in our twenties, we're grown women in our bodies but not in our minds. And I think it takes until thirty for a woman to become a grown woman and to really know her mind and what she wants. Until then it's a lot of romantic and desperate attachment. [My husband and I] were in a relationship for eight years. I just wouldn't get married. We dated, did things together, and for most of it we didn't date anybody else. I focused everything on [my career]. I told him a million times, "You get between me and my career, you're dead meat!" When I was thirty-five I realized that something very profound was missing from my life, and that was family and being a mommy. So we got married. It's kind of interesting that when you focus only on your career it doesn't do half as well as when you have a balanced life. Being a mother is the most important thing I've ever done and will do, and that's why I start every hour on my program with, "I am my kid's mom." I want everyone to be perfectly clear with all that they see that I do, that's the most important thing to me.

I remember at a book signing a young lady—a college student from one of those awful women's studies programs that I think ought to be made illegal—came up to me and said, "We talk about you in our women's studies class." I said, "I bet you do." "We just can't figure out with all your degrees and all of your accomplishments"—and she starts whispering—"why would you say you're your kid's mom?" I looked at her and I said, "I am very sad for what you will have to go through in the next twenty years to get that idea out of your head. I am very sad that that's what they're doing to you." ◆

Maureen Sirhal is a junior at the University of Michigan, and worked as an intern this past summer at the Weekly Standard.

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The Token Man

Be a Man

Big boys don't cry, admonishes *Philip Terzian*

It tells us something about our culture that the single most memorable public act of manliness this year was Olympic gymnast Kerri Strug's gallant vault to win the gold medal for her teammates. Despite her sprained ankle and the empathetic horror of the TV commentators, she followed her Romanian-born coach's exhortation—"You ken do eet!"—and threw herself over the bar with abandon, like a soldier of the Great War bounding out of his trench at the Germans.

Her tears, when they came, were bravely delayed, and caused by pain, not self-indulgence. So the fact that Miss Strug is a she, not a he, under five feet tall, and sounds like an LP played at 78, seems a further rebuke to what used to be called the ranks of American manhood.

I say this, I confess, as one who now listens to political oratory, or watches interviews on the tube, with a dread I never expected to encounter: fear that Congressman So-and-So, reminiscing about the antiwar movement, or Writer Such-and-Such, recalling a game of catch with his dad, will break down in tears at remembrance of things past. When Bob Dole accepted the Republican presidential nomination, my pleasure at his speech was tinctured with a kind of nervous anxiety. Twice, when alluding to his now-deceased father, the tell-tale signs of incipient bawling—quivering lips, glistening eyes, pulsating chin—crossed the senator's great stone face. But my prayers were answered: true to the code of his GI generation, Mr. Dole managed to pull himself together, and plowed his way manfully across the vale of tears.

Of course, men have been sobbing in public for ages. Jesus wept (John 11:35), as did Julius Caesar—at least according to Mark Antony—and F. Scott Fitzgerald once recorded that "riding in a taxi...I began to bawl because I had everything I wanted and knew I would never be so happy again." Sir Winston Churchill grew teary-eyed during standing ovations.

But it seems fair to say that the old male virtue of silence before tears, of retaining one's dignity by maintaining one's composure, has been broken with a vengeance. Men don't remove their hats in restaurants anymore, and now they are encouraged to snivel with abandon.

This is, to be sure, part of the temper of the times, a symptom of a deeper deterioration. Just as the Victorians associated tuberculosis with bohemian habits, modern Americans believe that restraining one's emotions is dangerously unhealthy. Whether or not this is so, I can personally attest that witnessing the sight of men letting go, of giving free rein to their blubbery emotions, is unhealthy as well. The torment of embarrassment for maudlin wedding toasts, the sight of tears coursing down Jimmy Swaggart's cheeks, the spectacle of bikers hugging and wailing at the Vietnam veterans memorial—these cause pain in their own particular way.

And all of these irksome examples, I fear, merely emphasize how far we have strayed from the honorable ideal of manliness. The very notion that being male involves some version of masculine behavior—strength, courtesy, courage, chivalry, virility, restraint—seems nearly as archaic as "manliness" itself. Does anyone use the word anymore, except in the sense of a caricature? Do fathers still urge their boys to be men? For as surely as males are freed from the confines of manly behavior, they may loosen the bonds of civilized conduct. The man who wears his sentiments on his sleeve, detached from the bygone code of male conduct, needn't stop at crying: his feelings will prompt him to practice brutal candor, cultivate his boorishness, terrorize subordinates, counsel his pregnant girlfriend to abort.

Our leaders still guide us by example, and every time President Clinton grows weepy, or wipes away a tear when the cameras start to roll, I entertain a worrisome series of thoughts about the nation's future. Just imagine, after all, how the president's tendency to whimper in public appears in retrospect. Can anyone picture Franklin D. Roosevelt, who ceased walking at the age of thirty-nine, sobbing for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor? Or Dwight D. Eisenhower, who sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers into combat, dissolving in the arms of John Foster Dulles?

Maybe Kerri Strug should consider entering politics. ●

Philip Terzian writes a syndicated column from Washington for the Providence Journal. *He is the husband of* TWQ *publisher Grace Paine Terzian.*

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It's All Over

Maggie Gallagher fingers the culprits in the demise of marriage

Today the white family stands poised, eerily, almost exactly where the black family was twenty-five years ago, before its rapid descent into a post-marital world.

◆ In 1960, twenty-three percent of black children were born to unwed mothers. Today the proportion is nearly the same for whites, and it is rising rapidly.

◆ In 1969, forty-three percent of babies born to black high school dropouts were illegitimate. Today, almost forty percent of babies born to white high school dropouts are illegitimate.

◆ In 1960, only sixty percent of black women aged twenty-five to twenty-nine were married. In 1990, only sixty-two percent of white women in this age group were married. Today the average white woman will spend only forty-three percent of her life married, very close to the forty percent a black woman spent in marriage in 1950.

"The changes in family structure that occurred among blacks are a leading indicator of what may happen among whites," writes Reynolds Farley in *After the Starting Line*. "Barriers to the educational and occupational advancement of black women declined recently, and they were strongly motivated to upgrade their position in the labor market because of the restricted economic gains of black men. Improvements in the earnings of black women, however, made marriage less necessary, made it less desirable to stay in an unpleasant marriage, and may have made it easier for husbands to dissolve marriages. If the earnings of white women rise, compared with those of white men, will we find that white families increasingly resemble current black families? Two decades from now will the majority of white children be born to unmarried women? Will thirty or forty percent of white children live below the poverty line?"

The collapse of marriage has created an emerging sexual economy in which there is an extraordinary discontinuity between the sexes: to succeed, a man had best marry and have children. To be financially secure, a woman had best remain single and childless.

Women, both black and white, are responding to this situation, quite rationally, by rapidly disinvesting in family life and refocusing on the world of work. This is no longer merely a matter of choice or preference (as it may have been in the 1960s and 1970s), but a response to scarcity—to the fear and anxiety with which today's young women approach sex, marriage, and children.

A 1994 *New York Times*/CBS poll of American teenagers revealed that only fifty-seven percent of teenage girls considered it very likely that they would have children, and only twenty-six percent deemed marriage as essential to their own happiness (compared to thirty-eight percent of teenage boys). Meanwhile, fully fifty-five percent of

Drawings by Yuri Kolyadenko

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America's teenage girls said they would consider having a baby out of wedlock.

We know that marriage can be made to disappear. It has already largely happened in the black community. It is happening in the American family at large. The question is, what will we do about it? As Paul E. Peterson wrote in *The Urban Underclass*, "The most powerful force contributing to the formation of the urban underclass ... may be the changing values of mainstream American society, in which the virtues of family stability, mutual support, and religiously based commitment to the marriage vow no longer command the deference they once did."

The sexual and the social mores that weakened marriage in the black community were the mores relentlessly peddled by white elites. The interrelated factors of rising divorce, failure to marry, skyrocketing illegitimacy, lower in-wedlock births, and lower male wages first experienced by African Americans are fast becoming the crises of the Western world. And all children, but especially the children of the poor, are paying the price for the sexual liberation of the well-to-do.

Just for the moment we may still be able to maintain the illusion that divorce and illegitimacy are separate and wholly distinct phenomena. Like the front and back of the bus, illegitimacy for blacks and divorce for whites. For the moment, the illusion is made easier by the fact that unwed motherhood is still relatively rare among white, college-educated women. But for the people who make, or fall into, the relevant decisions, divorce and illegitimacy are both distinct entrees into a similar lifestyle: single parenthood. Which is why, despite differences, divorce and illegitimacy are inevitably connected by a deep cultural logic, by prevailing cultural ideas about marriage. How favorably or unfavorably men and women view single parenthood depends on the stories of marriage and family that dominate the culture and the incentives toward marriage, both economic and moral, that are created and sustained by the community.

Are two parents necessary, or simply desirable? Do children need fathers, or can mothers do it all? How hard is it to be a single mother, anyway? How hard is it to get and stay married, and is the effort worth it?

The answers a community offers to questions like these will shape men's and women's attitudes toward both divorce and unwed motherhood. A society that enthusiastically approves of divorce will make at least one partner happy, and will have difficulty telling unmarried women that it is wrong to have a baby, if doing so will make them happy.

Unmarried women who consider having babies are often acutely aware of this connection, comparing themselves in this regard (and not unfavorably) to divorced women. "One of the things he is spared that children of divorce go through," says Emily, a freelance writer and unwed mother of Ethan, "is the fighting and using the child as a crowbar on each other."

This is part of the divorce paradox: the less demanding and restrictive marriage is, the less useful and attractive it becomes. When marriage no longer offers security to women raising children (which it can do only by securing the partners reasonably firmly in their obligations to each other, whether the bonds are legal, religious, cultural, or erotic), more and more women opt for the even greater insecurity of unwed motherhood. Marriage becomes not the only acceptable (or even the best) means of creating a new family, but a partnership between adults for the purpose of raising the adults' quality of life. Children become a risky hindrance to this struggle to get ahead—and a tremendous point of vulnerability in the event of divorce. The child-prone go ahead and have babies without marriage. The status-oriented get married but increasingly fear having children.

The more unreliable marriage becomes, the more couples eschew it for more casual couplings. Men see little reason to marry. Because if marriage seems a high-risk partnership to women, to men (especially good men) it begins to look like a chump's game where, if you act in good faith, you tie your devotion, work, and wealth to a woman who will not necessarily respect the bond. Women, meanwhile, afraid to depend on men, sharply increase their work commitment and drastically cut back on children.

As divorce becomes more the rule than the exception, stigmas against it inevitably wither away. It is not possible to stigmatize a majority practice. Unwilling to pass judgment or risk breaches with their friends and siblings, people no longer say out loud that divorce is bad, even for the children. Instead, they congratulate one another on having the courage to create a new life for themselves.

And as the stigma against divorce collapses, so too inevitably the stain against illegitimacy. If single-parent families are as good as two-parent families, even for the children, why wait for marriage? If it is okay to create a single family through divorce, why not do it without subjecting yourself and your kids to the trauma of divorce?

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As young lovers become increasingly anxious about getting "had" in marriage, cohabitation not only increases but gains respectability, aided by the older, divorced generation's difficulties in defending an institution they abandoned. Couples living together begin by insisting on the same social advantages as married couples—being invited to the same dinner parties and allowed to sleep together under their parents' roof. Finally, they begin to ask for the same legal benefits. Cohabitation, the great historical rival of marriage, begins to win the competition. "Relationships" drive out marriage as bad money drives out good. A less reliable and therefore cheaper security submerges the unique rewards of being married.

In this way a culture of divorce begins to displace a culture of marriage, and marriage itself becomes unable to perform its great historic function: committing the love and money of adults to their children—and to the future.

By expanding the definition of marriage to the point of meaninglessness, courts too are gradually redefining marriage out of existence. Over the past thirty years, quietly, and largely unremarked outside a narrow group of specialists, American family law has been rewritten to dilute both the rights and the obligations of marriage, while at the same time placing other relationships, from adulterous liaisons to homosexual partnerships, on a legal par with marriage in some respects.

The deconstruction of marriage is usually described (by courts as well as critics) as a way of increasing individual choice. This rhetoric ignores the reality that marriage consists of a special packet of reciprocal rights and responsibilities designed to protect family members and make family life attractive, to unify the interests of family members in a mutually supportive way. As these responsibilities blur—as they must when marriage is made indistinguishable from other relationships in which the parties have few, if any, responsibilities to each other—and the rights are parceled out to the unmarried, marriage itself begins to dissolve. The more other relationships begin to acquire the rights of marriage, and the more the law declines to enforce the special responsibilities of marriage, the more ghostly and insubstantial the marriage commitment becomes.

Marriage is a sexual option carved out of nature by custom, faith, society, and law. Marriage cannot be created by an individual, or even a couple, alone. In marrying, spouses acquire rights and assume obligations not only for themselves, but on behalf of their unborn children. At the heart of the idea of marriage is the vow by which two people pledge to transform the emotions of love into a durable, higher, and eternal reality, transcending the transience of human feeling. Like a soldier's oath, it is meant to sustain heroic efforts when they seem exhausting or dispiriting or terrifying, but which if abandoned would mean a personal and moral loss incomparable to the momentary relief of quitting. But soldiers are not sustained merely by their oaths; similarly, where society, custom, and law cease to uphold and sustain the marriage vow, where the obligations of marriage are made purely optional, and where the rights of marriage are granted to those who do not accept its obligations, then marriage functionally ceases to exist.

The numerous innovations blurring the legal distinction between marriage and non-marriage—knocking marriage off its pedestal—are scattered throughout family law. But they share a common theme: they conceptually discard the essence of marriage—the creation, from two individuals, of a new legal unit—and substitute a notion of two individuals temporarily paired in a series of nonbinding decisions. Legally and philosophically, the law has been deconstructing marriage into its component parts—a Chinese menu of love in which one takes one's pleasures from column A.

The law now forbids private individuals from distinguishing between married and unmarried couples in many cases. For example, many landlords and home mortgage companies, for a host of sound business as well as social reasons, once showed a certain favoritism for married couples and intact families. But with the rise in divorce rates, legislatures and courts established laws forbidding discrimination in housing or credit on the basis of marital status. This was done from a legitimate concern to protect the rising crop of newly divorced women and their children. Today, however, the laws prevent landlords, banks, and other private institutions from distinguishing between married and unmarried couples as well.

Such rulings are part of a growing trend to grant marital or family rights to individuals in relationships that are the "functional equivalents" of marriage. In the eyes of the law, marriage is increasingly reduced to a mere body count. Two bodies are two bodies. Whether they have legally pledged to have and to hold till death do them part or simply promised to share the washing-up makes no difference, so long as they happen to inhabit the same space. Landlords, for example, may freely choose to limit the number of people living on their property. They may decide to rent only to single individuals, or to two individuals, or to four individuals. What

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they are not legally permitted to do is to notice that there is any difference between a spouse and a sex partner, or for that matter, between a family and a frat house. In 1990, the New Jersey Supreme Court actually declared ten college students living together the "functional equivalent" of a family, for the purpose of zoning laws.

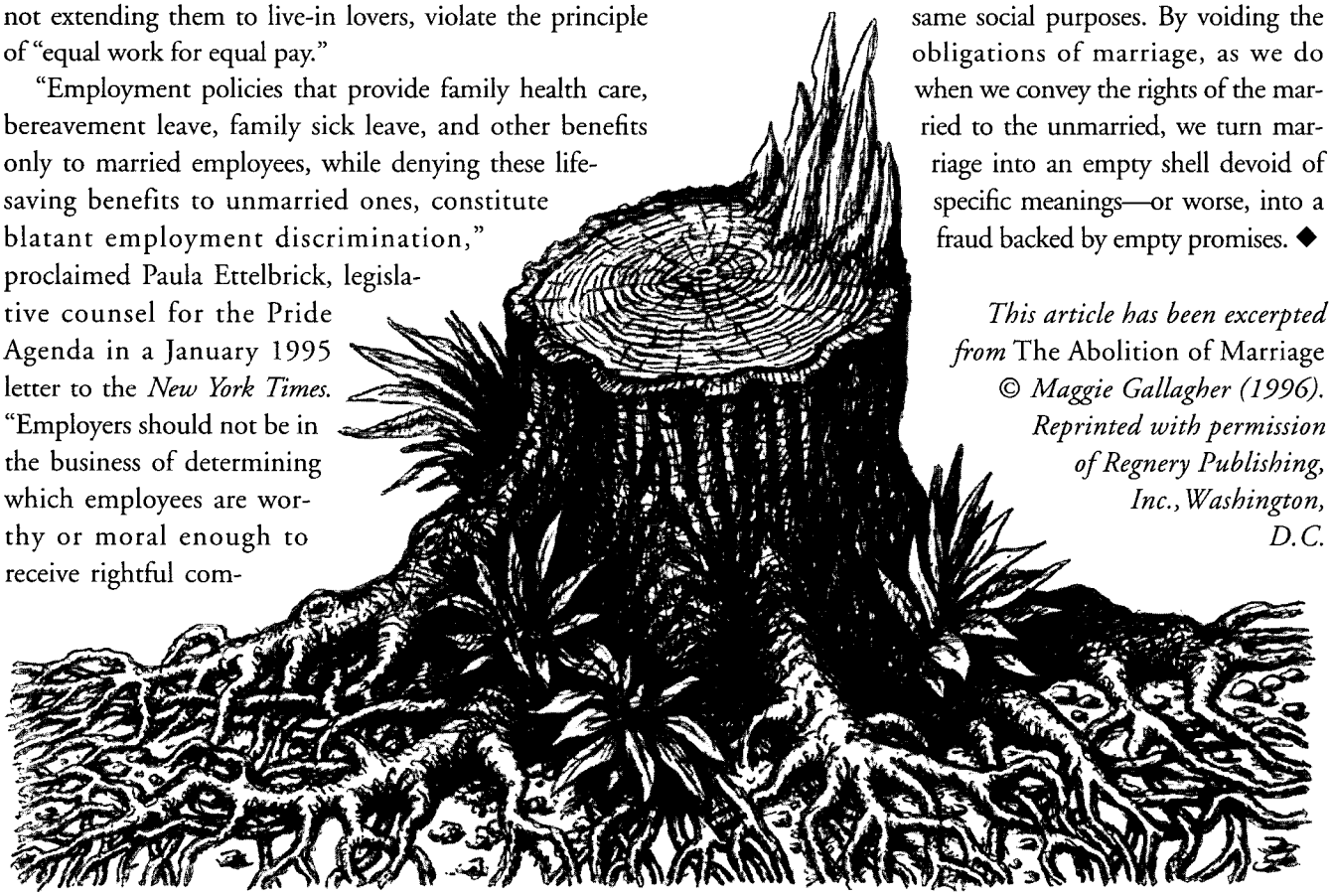
Thus in a reversal of the old-fashioned custom of frowning, however faintly, on those who shack up (and thus impersonate the married), the governments of New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and other cities now offer singles special privileges, if and only if they solemnly swear they are living together out of wedlock. But what commitment are these "close and committed" couples making to justify their new privileges? Marriage entails both rights and responsibilities. A husband can extend his health insurance to his wife, but he can also be bankrupted by her medical debts. By contrast, for domestic partners the commitments are optional while the benefits are guaranteed.

The activists cast their arguments in terms of equal protection: it is a violation of civil rights, they say, for the law to treat married and unmarried people differently. Thus, for example, they argue that laws or policies that permit an employer to extend employee benefits to spouses, while not extending them to live-in lovers, violate the principle of "equal work for equal pay."

"Employment policies that provide family health care, bereavement leave, family sick leave, and other benefits only to married employees, while denying these life-saving benefits to unmarried ones, constitute blatant employment discrimination," proclaimed Paula Ettelbrick, legislative counsel for the Pride Agenda in a January 1995 letter to the *New York Times*. "Employers should not be in the business of determining which employees are worthy or moral enough to receive rightful compensation, but rather are required by law to treat all employees equitably."

In taking this view, proponents of domestic partnership mistakenly portray the legal benefits of marriage as a kind of Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval handed out by the government for special sexual merit. Such a misconception reflects a much wider loss of understanding of the origin and nature of the rights (along with the concomitant responsibilities) that constitute marriage. Government's purpose of allowing husbands to extend health insurance to their wives was not to indicate, "Here, we like how you have sex, have some tax subsidies," nor even to convey a warm fuzzy official approval of family or family-like feelings. There are many family members to whom employees were never entitled to extend insurance benefits—their mothers or siblings, for example—however much they might need it.

By taking away the traditional supports of marriage, by even forbidding private citizens and institutions to favor families, we undermine the only institution ever shown to be capable of raising children or civilizing the erotic drives of men. By sharing the benefits of the married, such as the tax subsidy for health care, with pseudo-marriages, we encourage the disastrous illusion that such liaisons can perform the same social purposes. By voiding the obligations of marriage, as we do when we convey the rights of the married to the unmarried, we turn marriage into an empty shell devoid of specific meanings—or worse, into a fraud backed by empty promises. ◆



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The Weaker Sex

The Hand that Swipes the Dinner

Lee Lamothe's mother didn't need feminism to whack men into place

My mother is a charming woman, a war bride who married during the Second World War and divorced and remarried (the same man) after the Vietnam War. She met my father, a soldier, in London during the Blitz. He thought she was fun and a good drinker; she thought he was, as my younger daughter is wont to say, "funner." He didn't get any richer, and after coming home from Vietnam with metal plates in his head, became noticeably less funner. When I grew up, I lost contact with both of them for several years.

My mother is now seventy-five years old, and lives alone in northern Ontario, a widow and great-grandmother who still likes her pack of butts and her sip of wine to help her sleep. I guess she, like women of strengths earned and not demanded, realizes men have their uses, but are no substitute for a quiet drink and a few lipsticked filtertips when a lady wants to reflect on it all. Since my father's death, she has acquired two gentlemen companions, young pups barely past retirement age. They have trouble keeping up with her, which is, I guess, why she needs two—like pairs of shoes, she can wear one while the other pair gets a rest under the bed.

When my mother came down to the city recently for her annual summer visit, she seemed smaller in height, although she insisted she weighs what she's always weighed: about the same as two cases of Emu sherry. And if, in bone structure and motion, she tends to resemble a smiling bird, it isn't any bird that'll peck

bread crumbs from your hand and leave your watch ticking on your wrist.

My mother worked all her life and it shows: every day left a mark on her face; her husband and kids probably added a few more. She spent forty years wearing aprons and nurse's shoes, slinging dishes in a variety of restaurants, often bringing home suspiciously small, well-incised chunks of cooked steak, some of it already drenched in steak sauce or salted and peppered. This was a treat, usually on Sunday nights when people, I assume, left much of their meal in their haste to get to the theater or a hockey game. My three sisters and I never asked why the steak was so small or so irregularly cut: this, we knew, was a treat and as everyone knows, you don't bite the hand that swipes the dinner.

When my mother visited, it was a cool summer evening. We decided to eat inside, the two of us, my girlfriend and my younger daughter (fourteen with a thick mop of hair tastefully shaved up the sides like some kind of political prisoner, with a silver ring in her nose. The other, older, daughter was unavailable, busily pursuing her career of supplementing her welfare check with panhandling in a doorway in one of the trendier neighborhoods). We have a large kitchen, larger than any room I ever lived in as a boy. It was close to sundown, but there was still a lot of light washing in, again in contrast to the dark narrow rooms I remember from the 1950s.

I realized how few times I'd seen my mother in bright light, how her eyes sparkled. As we ate, I said little, just enough to keep my daughter's ideas challenged and her tippy mind on the edge of its seat. We discussed my last book and my next book, capital punishment, the wisdom of adding a pierced lip to complement a pierced nose, why my girlfriend rides a wheelchair and what does she miss most, dancing, walking, or gymnastic sex.

But I wasn't really listening. What I

Drawings by Paul Barker

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was doing was experiencing some kind of *satori*, looking from one woman to the other: a fourteen-year-old explaining the precaution of wearing a ski mask at a demonstration at a foreign consulate (so government agents wouldn't recognize her and put her on "the list") while her older sister, wielding a bullhorn, exhorted action from a dim-witted crowd; a stylish young blonde caught between dizzyingly differing generations of women of the same genetic code; a grey-haired widow in a knit track suit and running shoes that resembled large white puppies, looking obviously happy to be alive and in no way feeling shortchanged.

Surrounded by the women of my life, I thought, for no apparent reason, of two things: the past year's women's conference in Beijing and mops. To imagine my mother at the Beijing conference is like picturing Harpo Marx drunk in a factory assembly line. She'd send the security police for take-out food and the constantly whining organizers out to get their heads slapped. I don't think modern feminism and political correctness have penetrated my mother's consciousness. I'm pretty sure she'd have little use for them if they did; I'm damned sure my mother doesn't need to be liberated. She doesn't need to be urged to explore lesbianism to bring out her other side, or to have had natural childbirth to be in touch with her female strength. Or to be funded or subsidized or studied or propagandized. Because: my mother found liberation in the 1950s, before it was a profession, before it got you a trip to China or a meal with Hillary Clinton.

One year she had a job doing floors across town in the Jewish section (this was years before finding her career in food presentation and pilferage). Lugging her pails and mops, she rode the streetcar in the dark before dawn and rode home in the dark after dusk. The streetcars were always crowded with men, and by the time she got on, the seats were long taken. Chivalry was out of style in the exhausted working class of those days (transit time was often sleeping time, a little shut-eye between jobs), and she usually wound up standing in the middle of the streetcar.

One day she fumbled the tools of her trade and dropped a sponge on the floor. Bending to pick it up, the handle of her mop swung out and whacked a seated passenger. Of course when my mother, polite to a fault, turned to apologize, the mop handle, following the irreversible dynamics of vaudeville, immediately struck another dozing passenger. Again, she turned to apologize, and yet again rendered another passenger a co-star in her theater of pain. She found the next time she boarded the streetcar, men were eager to offer her their seats.

She will tell the story herself with a self-depreciating laugh and suitably embarrassed smile at her clumsiness. But ask her how men behaved towards women in the old days, and she'll still smile and tell you, "They were perfect gentlemen." ◆

Lee Lamothe is the author of Global Mafia *and* Criminal Acts II *(both Macmillan Canada: 1995).*

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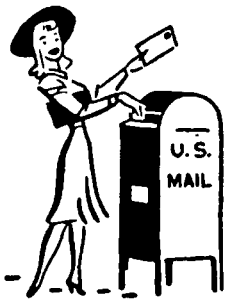
Correspondence

We are still receiving angry letters from the sufferers of Multiple Chemical Syndrome, courtesy of our cover story "The New Hysteria" (Spring 1996). Based on this enormous response, we can conclusively say that while MCS patients may be bothered by many chemical substances, they appear immune to the vapors of printer ink. Also, Sally Satel's article on animal crazies (Summer 1996) provoked the predictable outrage from the defenders of cats and chickens. If you *are bugged with us, you may as well join in. Please send your letter to the editor c/o* The Women's Quarterly, *2111 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 550, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3057, or fax it to 703/243-9230. You can also now flame us via E-mail: iwf@iwf.org. Of course, the editor is always pathetically grateful for nice letters too.*

What this woman wants

Those many perspectives in your last issue on "what woman wants" (Summer 1996) were well and good. But let's cut to the chase, and get at what women (at least this woman with two little daughters) really want:

- A Barbie doll with oversized hips.
- To be able to find all of the ingredients of a Martha Stewart recipe in the grocery store.
- To have the courage to say, "No she's not here," when a telemarketer calls and asks if I'm home.
- Not to care or even notice that I am wearing a sweatshirt in public with peanut butter smeared on the back of my left shoulder and socks that don't match my outfit.
- To take a shower without my baby playing peekaboo with the shower curtain.



- To remove a load of whites from the dryer with complete confidence that they will be snowy white.
- To lie on the couch with a book and hear my three-and-a-half year old say to her sister, "Oh, mommy's enriching her mind right now. Let's go into the bedroom and play for awhile."
- To sit down in my hairdresser's chair without feeling intensely vulnerable and without fearing that behind her smiles she must be thinking, "Doesn't this woman do anything with her hair between haircuts? And does she really think that hastily applied lipstick and facial powder cuts it as makeup?"

You could give me equal pay for equal work, and all those other things that men supposedly have that feminists think I should have, but in fulfilling these little wants those big wants seem less important.

ANITA ASHLAND
Madison, Wisconsin

Unendangered White Males

Re: "Endangered White Males" by Olivia Vlahos (Summer 1996). We so-called Endangered White Males are not in danger at all way down South in the land of cotton. As a breed, we may be dying because of old age, but not due to being pressed by youngsters shouting: "Hey, Pops, wanna fight?"

I've found that my automobile's rear license plate works wonders. It reads: "The Purple Heart—Combat Wounded." Even with my gray hair I am given wide berth. Often I venture out in my pick-up truck—even get on the interstate highway. My rear bumper sticker also earns me plenty of respect: "Billary In '96—NOT." Even the young ladies wave and smile with approval. I've thought about wearing an identical lapel pin. So you see, I'm covered. No problem.

Oh, Olivia—Mrs. Vlahos: You mentioned "riding shotgun from now on." Not a bad idea. We good ol' boys usually know where one of those is. Just for self-defense, you see. Very few "Hey, Pops, wanna fight?" are heard in UCLA (Upper Corner of Lower Alabama). But, we also know how to be Southern gentlemen. "May I open yo' door?"

JOHN GIVHAN
Safford, Alabama

The doctors are in it up to their eyeballs

Obviously, as a leader of a support group for people suffering from multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS), I take exception to Melinda Sidak's article "The New Hysteria" (Spring 1996). The technology to prove chemical injuries is finally beginning to catch up to the technology that created them. Yet there is a tremen-

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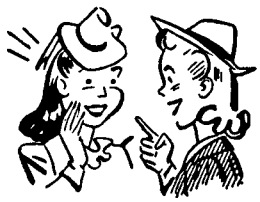
dous vested interest in maintaining MCS as a psychological illness. In 1991, the Chemical Manufacturer's Association stated, "There is no doubt these patients are ill—and deserving of compensation, understanding, and expert medical care. However, the primary impact on society would be the huge cost associated with the legitimization of environmental illness." The Environmental Sensitivity Research Institute (ESRI) is now advocating the elimination of all objective tests for chemical damage in MCS patients and advising doctors to withhold a diagnosis of MCS based on economic considerations. Under oath, the executive director of the ESRI did not dispute the fact that ninety-five to a hundred percent of his time is spent working on behalf of industry. Science is finally closing in on a valid explanation for MCS. It is only a matter of time until our battle for medical recognition is also over.

CYNTHIA WILSON
Executive Director, Chemical Injury Information Network
White Sulphur Springs, Montana

Good thing we're *not sensitive*

Having received your Spring 1996 issue on a trial basis, I was very pleased to see a forum for women professionals who do not buy into entitlements, etc. As a recently retired English professor, I totally agree with the view expressed by Lynne Cheney in "Calling Henry Higgins" and was delighted by "Jane Austen, Pundit" (Diary). However, as I read "The New Hysteria," I became dismayed. Yes, many MCS sufferers may have problems that are more stress-related than physically based. However, the article seems to be so one-sided as to allow no exceptions. That Melinda Sidak is a member of the national advisory board of the Independent Women's Forum is especially troubling as the rhetoric of her article seems to reflect the general rhetorical tone of *The Women's Quarterly*. Ironically, that tone is just as one-sided and superficial as the rhetoric of the feminist publications that we seek to counter!

KATHLEEN MACDONALD
Hanover, New Hampshire



We'll take that as a compliment

Just a quick note to inform you that I would like to be removed from your mailing list. I think I represent the average American woman better than almost anyone. I support abortion rights, oppose women in combat, oppose affirmative action, and basically oppose an ERA. Your articles on abortion (Winter 1996; Summer 1996) do not show you to be in line with most women—we are overwhelmingly pro-choice! Neither does sending Laura Ingraham out on the talk show circuit to represent you behoove the organization, either. Every time she is on "Politically Incorrect," "Charlie Rose," etc. she is representing the anti-choice position.

Tsk, tsk! You should be more honest about where you stand on the issues. I cannot tell you apart from Concerned Women for America.

KRIS KRAWFORD
Kernersville, North Carolina

[Editor's note: The articles the reader refers to were indeed critical of the pro-choice movement. They were written by Candace Crandall, who is herself pro-choice. Careful readers, however, will have noticed the disclaimer on our masthead which states that no article represents the view of the Independent Women's Forum. The IWF, whose board and executive is composed of women whose private beliefs reflect both sides of the issue, does not take an official position on abortion. It is impossible for the IWF to paste a similar disclaimer on Laura Ingraham's forehead. However, given the enormous tolerance the IWF has demonstrated towards TWQ, *I doubt it would attempt or want to censor Miss Ingraham's views.]*

Why the majority of Americans aren't scientists

Sally Satel paints a distorted picture of those who oppose animal experiments, and she is overzealous in her support for animal research ("Animal Crackers," Summer 1996). For the record, I am pro-life; I support civil/human rights; I care about world hunger and health issues; I oppose animal experimentation not because I "value it above human life," but because I believe it is bad science.

According to the Associated Press (1995), seventy percent of Americans are prepared to accept the need for animal research, under some circumstances. But a recent survey by the National Science Foundation (1996) found that over seventy-five percent of Americans sampled lacked fundamental knowledge of basic science: only nine percent knew what a molecule was, and only twenty-one percent could define DNA. Apparently, the public is being unduly influenced by the medical (not the "animal rights") community in its support for animal research.

Lastly, funding has been withdrawn for

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animal-based research projects because those projects were found to be wasteful, cruel, and to lack scientific merit. Given that almost forty percent of the National Institute of Health's ($11-plus billion) budget is devoted to animal-based research, how many thousands of equally worthless research projects (equalling hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars) are ongoing? It's hard to know due to the secrecy surrounding much of the research. Redirecting our nation's research budget to clinical (human-based) research, epidemiology, preventive medicine, and advanced diagnostic and therapeutic technologies would do much to improve our health, modernize medical research/health care, and restore compassion to science.

EMILY FANO
New York, New York

Beats tying the bag to us

I WAS SORRY to read Sally Satel's article about women and animal rights. A fresh approach from a progressive women's journal would have made more sense. I don't see what satisfaction a woman can have knowing that an animal who is not responsible for her condition is forced to bear the burden of her existence. Menopause is a part of the normal course of a woman's life. Why should a mare be hitched to a stall with a urine bag tied around her genitals so that her human counterpart can have an easier time of it?

I cannot respect such women. I see no future in them, just the same old cycles of repetitive cruelty and smug selfishness including a type of brain that can only reprogram attitudes and practices already formulated mainly by the opposite sex. Your very style of PETA-bashing is all rehash. Please bring something new to this subject that is both fresh and fair.

KAREN DAVIS, Ph.D.
President,
United Poultry Concerns, Inc.
Potomac, Maryland

At last, someone defends us

GORDON LEVY'S LETTER (Correspondence, Summer 1996) reminded me that *Reason* published Michael Fumento's article on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity at about the same time as Melinda Sidak's. The two dovetail neatly. Fumento described the clinical trials, designed by proponents of MCS and MCS "therapists" to prove MCS exists and can be treated. The results proved it non-existent, and Fumento quotes a clinician who repeats the experiment for individual patients to prove the point.

As an Army draftee, Fumento so disliked the military that he suspects his dislike led to allergy-like (or MCS-like) symptoms. If the data disprove an organic disease, is it respectful to ignore the data and encourage "therapies" that demonstrably do not help? Fumento is especially good at explaining the science that debunks "Gulf War Syndrome" (Gulf War veterans or their families, as a group, had fewer cases of the "symptoms" than the rest of us) or the "Devil's Element" theory of dioxin (when thousands of tons of this "terrible poison and carcinogen" were accidentally dumped on an Italian city, decades later the health histories of those exposed were statistically almost indistinguishable from a control group).

Many thanks for a thought-provoking, elegantly written quarterly.

TED LINDSAY
Westport, Connecticut

Glad you did

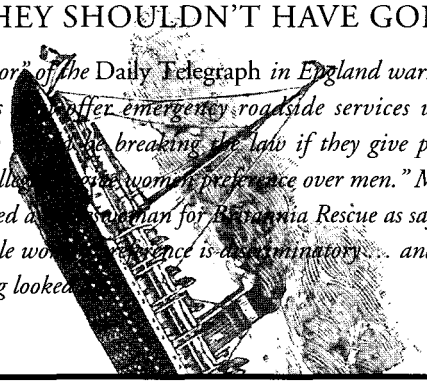
WELL, YOU SAID we could write you, so I have. I want to personally thank you for showing me that I am not alone in my thinking. Our country is in great need of your publication. Word needs to get out that there are women with ideas like those expressed through the Independent Women's Forum. Thank you!

JALANE SCALFANI
Thousand Oaks, California

AND ON THE *TITANIC* THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE FIRST, EITHER

A LITTLE ITEM from the "motoring editor" of the Daily Telegraph *in England warns us of a practice that might soon be made illegal over here. Companies that offer emergency roadside services were warned by the British Equal Opportunities Commission that they [illegible] breaking the law if they give priority to rescuing lone or pregnant women," saying that "it was unfair and possibly illegal [illegible] women preference over men." Motoring organizations professed to be "astonished" by the opinion. The* Telegraph *quoted a [illegible]man for Britannia Rescue as saying, "This is taking political correctness a bit too far. We don't think giving vulnerable wo[illegible]ference is discriminatory... and I'm sure most men would not mind if they thought their wives or daughters were being looked*

Well, only most sexist *men.* ◆



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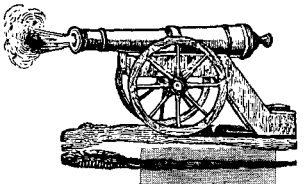
One last observation . . .

Save the Males

The following "Code of a Gentleman" is excerpted from the Virginia Military Institute's "Rat Bible," which is given to every first year cadet upon his entry into the august school. The new "rat" is required to keep the manual with him at all times and to memorize its contents. The Supreme Court's recent ruling in United States v. Virginia, *which requires VMI to go co-ed if it wishes to continue to receive public funding, will no doubt put an end to this sort of old-fashioned nonsense. In his dissent from the majority opinion, Justice Antonin Scalia cited the "Code of a Gentleman," saying rather wistfully, "I do not know whether the men of VMI lived by [it]; perhaps not. But it is powerfully impressive that a public institution of higher education still in existence sought to have them do so. I do not think any of us, women included, will be better off for its destruction."*

-Anita K. Blair

The Supreme Court outlaws chivalry



The Code of a Gentleman

Without a strict observance of the fundamental Code of Honor, no man, no matter how "polished," can be considered a gentleman. The honor of a gentleman demands the inviolability of his word, and the incorruptibility of his principles. He is the descendant of the knight, the crusader; he is the defender of the defenseless and the champion of justice . . . or he is not a Gentleman.

A Gentleman. . .

◆ Does not discuss his family affairs in public or with acquaintances.

◆ Does not speak more than casually about his girlfriend.

◆ Does not go to a lady's house if he is affected by alcohol. He is temperate in the use of alcohol.

◆ Does not allow his temper; nor exhibit anger, fear, hate, embarrassment, ardor, or hilarity in public.

◆ Does not hail a lady from a club window.

◆ Never discusses the merits or demerits of his lady.

◆ Does not mention names exactly as he avoids the mention of what things cost.

◆ Does not borrow money from a friend, except in dire need. Money borrowed is a debt of honor, and must be repaid as promptly as possible. Debts incurred by a deceased parent, brother, sister, or grown child are assumed by honorable men as a debt of honor.

◆ Does not display his wealth, money, or possessions.

◆ Does not put his manners on and off, whether in the club or in a ballroom. He treats people with courtesy, no matter what their social position may be.

◆ Does not slap strangers on the back nor so much as lay a finger on a lady.

◆ Does not "lick the boots of those above" nor "kick the face of those below him on the social ladder."

◆ Does not take advantage of another's helplessness or ignorance and assumes that no gentleman will take advantage of him.

◆ Respects the reserves of others, but demands that others respect those which are his.

◆ Can become what he wills to be. ◆

Anita Blair is executive vice president and general counsel of the Independent Women's Forum. She also serves on VMI's Board of Visitors.

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An "increasingly high-profile group that says the time has come to put a new face on feminism."

–Ed Bradley, correspondent for CBS's "60 Minutes," on the IWF

FOR THE PAST three years, the Independent Women's Forum has been taking on the old establishment of feminist organizations—and winning. "The IWF has a profile almost unheard of for a group that is the new kid on the block," writes the *Boston Globe*. "In the marketplace of ideas, from the national news media all the way down to local radio, the IWF has shown its real strength.... [The] IWF is well on its way to becoming the foremost media nemesis of the feminist movement."

Why has the IWF been so successful? Because the women who make up the IWF are not radical ideologues —they're businesswomen, economists, lawyers, truck drivers, and also mothers. Because the IWF promotes individual responsibility, strong families, limited government, and opportunity—policies that help *all* Americans. Because the IWF, a non-partisan, non-profit Washington-based organization, sponsors speaker events and conferences noted for their provocative and free-ranging debates. And because the IWF publishes *The Women's Quarterly*—an intellectual antidote to *Ms.*—which syndicated columnist Mona Charen praises as, "My type of women's magazine! With humor and sarcasm but also with warmth and passion, these women offer an intelligent refutation of the leading feminist nonsense that is swallowed so uncritically by the mainstream press."

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The Women's Quarterly

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